511 Transit Focus Group Findings Report
Submitted by Wolfe/Doyle Advertising

I. Background

Focus groups were conducted in November, 2001, among Bay Area residents who take transit and access transit information over the phone or Web. The purpose of this research was to understand attitudes and behaviors related to transit information usage, in general and with respect to the current transitinfo.org service and potential enhancements. These findings (and other learning) will be applied primarily to marketing communications planning and product development in preparation for the Bay Area launch of the Web Portal. A secondary application of these findings will be to planning 511 phone services, which will offer transit information as a key component.

II. Methodology

Focus groups were conducted in two locations -- San Francisco and Berkeley -- in order to include various users of some of the Bay Area's primary transit services. The groups involved a total of 14 participants, recruited according to the following criteria:

- Aged 20-54, particularly 25-54
- HHI $21,000 to $65,000 (<$21,000 only if a student)
- Take transit at least 3 times a week
- Reside in San Francisco, Alameda, or San Mateo County
- Have searched for or requested transit information within the past 6 months
- Use the internet for personal use at least twice a week
- Are potentially interested in a Web site exclusively for Bay Area transit users

The criteria for recruiting participants were established on the basis of usage demographics revealed by the RIDES Commute Profile 2001, as well as on the basis of target audience discussions with MTC management and its agencies.

The focus groups agenda was structured to cover four key areas of discussion:

1. Category definition, salience, and options -- A topline discussion of how participants define transit information, its importance, what their options are for this type of information, and how they choose between those options.

2. Usage occasion/relevance -- An exploration of the specific factors that trigger awareness and usage of any/all sources of transit information, with emphasis on when these trigger occur, how they may vary, and how they influence information search/selection.

3. Current Transitinfo.org as an option -- Based on the homework assignment, a discussion of factors that would encourage or discourage trial and usage of the current site, including specific likes/dislikes.

4. Enhanced transitinfo.org as an option -- A group exercise to "build" an ideal transit information service, to see how many of the planned features for the enhanced site would arise spontaneously. This would be followed by a review, evaluation, and discussion of enhanced transit information features, and a brief exercise to explore perceptions of what types of people would/would not be likely to use the new transit information site.

Specific questions and all group discussion were recorded on videocassettes, which will be made available to MTC. The moderator's guide is attached (Attachment A).

III. Findings

1. Category Definition, Salience, and Options

Definition -- Respondents defined "transit information" in terms of seven categories of information, ranging from relatively dynamic to fairly static:

• schedules and on-time status
• transit news/updates
• routes and maps
• conveniences (such as elevators and bike racks)
• fares
• contact information for transit operators
• system regulations

Of the above categories, the three that seemed most common and fundamental were schedules, routes and maps, and fares. Regarding schedules, respondents specified both *routine* schedules and *special* schedules for Holidays, nights and weekends.

Salience -- Overall, respondents felt transit information is very important. Its importance is based on the role such information plays in helping people:

• decide what social or leisure opportunities are viable
• explore the Bay Area
• get to work on time

• plan how to get to an airport
• consider other parts of the Bay Area to live in

Options -- Respondents indicated they have a very wide and apparently fragmented range of options for transit information. This range includes transportation agency web sites and phone numbers, other Web sites like Yahoo and Mapquest, brochures, signs, platform screens, posters, transit employees, fellow employees and transit users, news agencies, phone books, visitors bureaus, and bulletin boards. Of these, the best sources were identified as the internet, followed by the phone and brochures/booklets. Looking at the perceived qualities of these sources in further detail ...

a) The internet -- The internet was described as the most comprehensive and up-to-date source for transit information. Respondents reported good experiences getting transit information directly from transit operator Web sites and through mass portals like Yahoo.

b) The phone -- Reactions to getting transit information by phone were mixed. A few respondents who call transit operators for information seemed to like the ease and immediacy of picking up the phone and talking to a real person. Others, however, seemed to feel that "getting through" to transit operators is often difficult over the phone.

c) Brochures/booklets -- Although only one respondent reported frequent use of transit brochures, the general attitude in the groups was that brochures are very good at covering the basics for a given transit system. For most respondents, however, their daily transit commute had become so routine that there was no need for a brochure, and for occasional non-commuting trips to new destinations, most seemed to prefer the internet.

Among the information sources that respondents used or liked less, signs were criticized for being unreliable due to potentially outdated information, and transit employees were described as sometimes unreceptive to transit information inquiries.

2. Usage Occasion/Relevance

In this part of the discussion, both groups indicated there are two general situations that create a strong need for transit information: "*out of the ordinary* " *trips*, and *service disruptions affecting daily commutes:*

a) "Out-of-the-ordinary" is how several respondents referred to transit trips other than their routine commutes -- trips to the airport, for example. Such trips trigger a need for transit information because they might require travel on an unfamiliar system, or to an

unfamiliar part of the Bay Area, or during nights, weekends or Holidays, when services are less regular and predictable. Currently, respondents plan out-of-the-ordinary trips with multiple information sources, and indicated that a single source for any/all transit trip planning would be a great convenience.

Respondents had mixed feelings about out-of-the-ordinary trips. Positive feelings were based on the fact that such trips may involve socializing or weekend leisure travel to Bay Area events or attractions. Younger respondents noted that transit allows socializing without worrying about drinking and driving, and offers more environmentally appropriate access to nature areas than going by car. In general, respondents indicated that they view transit as not only a connection to work, but also to leisure and the places that make living in the Bay Area worthwhile.

On the negative side, however, respondents talked about transit potentially leaving them stranded at night -- requiring them to wait extensively for the next train or bus, or having to find an alternative means to get home. The issue of "Night Owl" or late night service came up a few times in the groups, always with the sense that the Bay Area transportation system isn't user-friendly for people who stay out late. Accordingly, new transit or transit information services that facilitate late night travel would be strongly appreciated.

b) <u>Service disruptions during routine commutes</u> -- Transit strikes, mechanical problems, power outages and other emergencies seemed quite top-of-mind as occasions when transit information is particularly important. Respondents said that they hear about service disruptions from traditional news media and word-of-mouth, but indicated a desire for more reliable, timely, or in-depth information.

Later in the groups, during the "ideal" exercise, respondents discussed a third situation when transit information is important: when they're trying to time a bus or train. This finding is discussed in section 4.

3. Reactions to Transitinfo.org

As a homework assignment prior to the groups, respondents were asked to visit transitinfo.org and come prepared to discuss their reactions to the site. Overall, these reactions were fairly consistent among the respondents, and clearly indicated that transitinfo.org is seen as a great concept that could benefit from better execution ...

a) <u>The core perceived value of transitinfo.org is that it conveniently centralizes a great deal of otherwise dispersed information</u> -- For respondents accustomed to getting transit information from multiple sources, the transitinfo.org concept of all information in one

place was seen as uniquely useful and convenient. When respondents noticed how many transit agencies are listed on the site, they seemed to value the site all the more.

Also worth noting was that respondents enjoyed learning about transit services, such as VINE in Napa County, that evoke images of traveling to appealing Bay Area destinations like the wine country. With several such services listed in one place, respondents seemed more inclined to think adventurously about where transit could take them.

b) <u>The convenience of centralized transit information is most vividly dramatized by the Trip Planner</u> -- Of all the features on the site, the Trip Planner seemed to be the one that makes centralized information the most tangible and practical ... and even exciting. Without prompting, almost all respondents tried the Trip Planner and felt that it was an excellent idea (although not so good in execution, as discussed in section "c" below). "*I was very impressed*", one respondents said, "*because it's very irritating to talk to each different agency and them not knowing anything about the next step ... they don't take you from point A to point B and from point B to point C. And from that perspective, I really liked this.*"

One of the apparent reasons why respondents were so easily interested in the transit Trip Planner is their prior, positive experiences with trip-planning features on Mapquest and My Yahoo. Although respondents used the latter services for driving, they felt the same technology would work equally well for transit trip planning.

c) <u>Several respondents who tried the Trip Planner were disappointed by the results</u> -- . These respondents were "testing" the Trip Planner for accuracy, using known routes or itineraries to see how well the results would compare to their first-hand experience. Some respondents got no results back, apparently because they missed the instructions indicating that not all Bay Area transit systems and areas have been included. Other respondents got results that seemed counter-intuitive, too convoluted, or just plain wrong. One dissatisfied respondents said "*I didn't agree with any of the answers. I would <u>not</u> have done what they said to do.*"

d) <u>Visually, the transitinfo.org site appears utilitarian but uninspiring.</u> Though some respondents liked the no-nonsense clarity of clear text headings and alphabetized subjects, the overall impression seemed to be that the site is too text driven and "*feels like a first draft*". Respondents suggested some visual relief in the form of graphics, because otherwise the site is "*just kind of 'blah' ... bunched up ... generic.*" Respondents, especially the younger ones, seemed to want to see more of their personality and lifestyle reflected in the site's appearance.

e) Some respondents felt that they didn't know enough about transit to use the site to its best advantage -- As one respondent said about transitinfo.org, "*You have to know information to use information, and I thought that was a big flaw*." Other respondents agreed, saying that the extensive alphabetical listing of transit systems on the home page was intimidating for them because they were completely unfamiliar with many of those systems. How could they pick a transit system for information about a specific destination unless they first knew what system(s) served that destination?

For this and other reasons, respondents suggested a prominent "search box" near the top of the home page. This would ensure that if a user doesn't know where to click for the information they need, they could begin with a search. Respondents indicated that because search boxes are now standard and expected, they were surprised that trasnitinfo.org didn't have one. As one respondent said: "*There's no search box on that* (transitinfo.org) *at all. On any Web site you go to, there's a search box*." Another suggestion was to include a map with the transit agencies indicated by service area.

4. The Ideal Transit Information Service

Discussion of an ideal transit information service was prompted by an exercise in which respondents were paired and asked to collaborate on conceptually building a service from scratch. They were encouraged to focus on what would be ideal for them, and disregard practical considerations about feasibility.

Collectively, respondents created ideal systems with one common dominant theme, and several similar secondary themes:

a) The dominant theme among respondents was a kiosk-like system that would make transit information accessible from outside the home -- Respondents seemed to want street access to transit information just as banking customers want ATMs, and probably for a similar reason: you could be anywhere when you needed transit information, or cash. Like newer ATMs, such transit information kiosks would offer touch screens. These screens would display text, system maps, Bay Area geography and landmarks, icons such as for airports, and indications of where the next bus or train is, and when it will arrive. A couple of respondents suggested that the kiosks should have transactional capabilities for selling or refreshing transit cards.

While some respondents rationalized the kiosks with the observation that "not everybody has a computer", the primary reason for kiosks was a personal need to access better information at any time (24 hours, weekends, etc) *while in transit* -- with "better" meaning more centralized and coordinated among the Bay Area's different transit systems.

Worth noting is that in recent focus groups among bicyclists, respondents also invented an ATM-like kiosk for dispensing transportation information. The fact that people with different demographic characteristics and transportation behaviors came up with essentially the same idea -- weeks apart and in different locations -- is fairly striking. If an explanation could be offered, it is that people appear to be having very good experiences getting planning-related information on the Web (especially at Yahoo and Mapquest), and that, for such information, the Web has become a much-preferred source than the telephone. With a large screen and visually rich information, kiosks would seem better than phones for making the Web-based experience available outside the home. ...

b) <u>Visuals were emphasized, both for informational and stylistic reasons</u> -- Whether respondents conceived touch-screen kiosks or traditional Web sites, they consistently specified the visuals that would be designed into their systems. As would be expected, many respondents specified maps. Some suggested regional "thumbnails" supplemented by more detailed system maps with color-coding -- specifically, like the IRT maps in New York City; (http://www.nycsubway.org/maps/) Others suggested maps that include photographs or lifelike images of Bay Area landmarks. These various types of visuals seemed important to help orient users, and to both stimulate and guide their thinking process.

Visuals also seemed important as a way for respondents to give their ideal service some style and lifestyle interest. One team wanted their ideal service to have a distinctly urban, youthful feel. Another team wanted a "*modern, clean, simple, fun*" style like "*electronic board games*." Here and at several other points in the focus groups, respondents seemed to convey a sense of excitement about travelling within the Bay Area, and visuals seemed to offer a strong stimulus to evoke this excitement.

c) <u>Some respondents advocated systems to time the next train or bus</u> -- Information to time trains and buses seems to qualify as a third category of transit information identified by this research. With some laughter, many respondents agreed that the next bus always arrives just as you've given up waiting and have started to walk ... and then it passes you by. Others empathized with one respondent's description of just missing a train and then being "trapped" (for up 30-40 minutes) until the next train arrived -- and agreed that real time "next train" information should be available at street level, before entering the station. Accordingly, a few respondents conceived of screens or kiosks outside train stations, or at bus stops, that would accurately time the arrival of the next train or bus.

d) <u>When naming their ideal services, respondents tended toward playful names within the existing acronym or concatenation styles of transit nomenclature</u> -- Motivated by the perception that "transitinfo.org" was a little dry and bureaucratic-sounding, respondents wanted to make their ideal service sound more lively and exciting. This tendency again indicated that respondents view transit as not just a way to work, but also as a vital link to leisure activities and their social lives. Some selected names in the acronym (BART) style of transit nomenclature, with suggestions like BITS (Bayarea Internet Transportation System) or BATS (Bay Area Transit Services). Others used a concatenation (FastPass) style, bringing together new combinations of existing words and ideas -- for example, "BayWatch", "MultiTransitLink", and "CarFree".

e) <u>Several ideal services included at least one particularly civic-minded feature</u> -- Whether it was kiosk instructions in Braille, graphics for people who are not fluent in English, multilingual versions of the service, a comments/questions/feedback form, or information on transit systems using clean-burning fuels, almost every team of respondents incorporated a feature that demonstrated sensitivity toward the Bay Area's diversity and environment.

5. Transitinfo.org Features

Respondents were given a set of seven features describing possible enhancement to the transitinfo.org web site, and were asked to rank and discuss the importance of these features (see Attachment B).

Of the seven features, three were ranked an average of 4.1 or higher on a scale where "1" was "not at all important" and "5" was "very important". Note that since this was qualitative research, figures such as these represent the thinking of the focus group respondents, and should not be projected to a larger group. However, these findings should help identify if and why certain features were felt to be more important than others.

a) <u>The leading feature was that "An automated trip planner will generate a detailed transit itinerary based on the origin and destination you enter.</u>" -- This was ranked an average of 4.4 and was selected as "most important" by 29% of respondents. As discussed in previous sections, respondents favored a trip planner for its tremendous convenience in enabling "out of the ordinary" trips. Also influencing preference for this feature was the fact that respondents were familiar with online trip planning via Yahoo and Mapquest, and have had very good experiences with those services.

b) <u>An almost equally popular feature was "A search function will help you find specific transit information quickly and easily.</u>" -- This was also ranked an average of 4.4 and was selected as "most important" by 21% of respondents. This feature seemed important because respondents felt that in many instances, they would not know what existing, general categories of information might contain the answer to their question. Hence, they wouldn't know where to click. In these situations, a search function would let them approach the question almost as they would verbally -- by asking a broad question or stating a general topic, and then choosing more information based on the options provided by the search results. As with the trip planning feature, the search function seemed like it would be more likely used for "out-of-the-ordinary" trips.

Respondents stated that for these "search boxes" to be useful, they should be somewhat forgiving about how place names or service names are spelled. Several respondents mentioned frustrating experiences with online search functions that demand precise spelling. Such demands seemed inappropriate, given that "search" users are probably unfamiliar with the subject being searched, and therefore less likely to know correct spellings.

c) <u>The third most popular feature was "The Web site will post general announcements about new or changed transit services.</u>" -- This was ranked an average of 4.1 and was selected as "most important" by 14% of respondents. Respondents felt this feature was important because it would alert them to situations that might interfere with their ability to get to work. The relatively high ranking of this feature corresponds with earlier discussion about the importance of information regarding service disruptions to routine commutes.

d) <u>The corresponding ranking for remaining features were</u>: "Intelligent interactive maps will let you zoom in or out for transit information at various scales and levels of detail" (3.8) (29%); "Popular Bay Area destinations will be listed and linked to their own transit information and trip-planning capabilities" (3.4) (0%); "You will be able to register for emails about changes that could affect your specific travel patterns" (3.0) (14%); and "You will be able to create a personalized web page with the transit information that's most important to you" (2.8) (7%).

e) <u>Overall, transit-related features were ranked lower than traffic-related features in 511 research</u> -- In recent focus groups among traffic information services users, almost all new traffic information features were ranked 4.2 or higher, and there was more consensus on which ones were "most important". These findings make sense, given that car commuters need traffic information daily and primarily for work-related reasons. Conversely, transit commuters say they don't really need transit information on a daily basis, and when they do need it, they are more likely to need it for leisure or non work-related travelling.

6. Who Would Use the New Service

As a wrap-up exercise, respondents were given a sheet depicting men and women from 12 different occupations and lifestyles, and were asked to indicate which of the people shown were "most likely to use the new transit information Web site." Respondents could select as many or as few people as they felt appropriate. Most of the men and women depicted were chosen to represent the same approximate age and income groups as the respondents. A variety of professions and lifestyles was represented (listed below).

The primary purpose of the exercise was to see how narrow or broad respondents would be in their selections. A secondary objective was to see if any common demographic or psychographic themes seemed to emerge from their selections.

On average, respondents chose 9 out of 12 people as "most likely users" of the enhanced transitinfo.org site, indicating that they perceived the site as having potentially very broad appeal and utility.

To the extent that any professions/lifestyles were over-selected, those selections skewed toward women (working mom, dental assistant, and college student) and younger-looking people (college student and paralegal). Professions or lifestyles that seemed under-selected were the one that seemed skewed toward appearances and image (fashion consultant and SVP Marketing).

The results of this exercise were as follows: female college student (100%); ethnic working mom (86%); ethnic female dental assistant (86%); male paralegal (86%); senior female community services volunteer (79%); ethnic male animator (79%); ethnic male accountant (79%); male nurse (79%); male police office (71%); male maintenance worker (71%); female SVP Marketing (64%); female fashion consultant (64%). Again, these numbers reflect the assessments of the respondents and should not be projected to a larger group.

7. Incidental Findings

Although there was no specific section of the focus groups when airport information was discussed in any depth, airports were mentioned a few times here and there -- enough to indicate that they are important with respect to transit information. Bay Area airports probably deserve a separate, prominent heading or icon on the enhanced trasnitinfo.org site.

Another incidental finding is that schedule-related information about MUNI bus service would probably not be taken seriously on a transit information service. Respondents perceived MUNI as being in "*their own little world*", with buses that don't follow any reliable schedule or pattern. These perceptions were so strong that highlighting any schedule-related information about MUNI could harm the credibility of the site as a whole.

IV. Assessments and Implications

1. Positioning

• <u>The enhanced transitinfo.org Web site lends itself to a positioning as a lifestyle resource for people who seek to maximize transit's utility for more than just work-related commuting. In other words, it also helps transit users access the out-of-the-ordinary part of their lives</u> -- Quite clearly, the respondents in both focus groups indicated a strong need for a transit information resource that helps them plan a variety of trips beyond their day-to-day commutes. For the majority of respondents, who were unaware of transitinfo.org, such a resource didn't seem to exist. Multiple transit operators don't collectively fill this need because their information and systems are disparate, fragmented, and largely unfamiliar to users. Consequently, destination-oriented trip planning, which only applies to trips other than daily work commutes, can be tedious -- especially if more than one transit system is required to reach a particular destination.

As a lifestyle resource, transitinfo.org would be positioned as more than a functional, utilitarian entity. It would be a brand that appeals to -- and manifests -- the defining attitudes and feelings of its primary users. Such an emotional fit between the brand and the target is well-advised, given that the target seemed to express much more than a purely rational need for transit information. Specifically, they seemed to want a transit information service that captures their urban energy, sense of fun and adventure, and even social and political sensitivities.

Within this positioning, transitinfo.org would be putting *primary* emphasis on non-routine trips, but not *exclusive* emphasis. The positioning also acknowledges that the target tends to take transit to work, and needs information to flag potential service disruptions that could affect their ability to get to work on time.

2. Positioning of Web Service versus Phone Service

• The Web-based service should anchor the above positioning while the phone-based service maintains a temporarily low profile -- With its visuals, maps, trip-planning function, and printable information, the enhanced transit Web site would have significant feature and benefit superiority over what could be delivered by phone. This conclusion is based on how respondents ranked the internet versus the phone for transit information, and on the importance they placed on visuals and a trip-planning function (which, obviously, a current phone-based service can't deliver).   For this reason, transit users should be encouraged to use transitinfo.org more so than the transit information phone service (817-1717 or 511), at least until the features and functionality of a phone-based system are massively enhanced.

This is not to say that the phone service has little relative value, but that the promises implied by the positioning would be better fulfilled by the transitinfo.org Web site. In the near term, wireless phone service is the only practical alternative for out-of-home access to transit information, and this research clearly indicated that out-of-home access is important. The phone service might be particularly important for out-of-the-ordinary evening travel, when respondents indicated that they worry about erratic schedules and getting stranded. At these times, phone access to Night Owl transit schedules would offer particular comfort and a distinct benefit of the phone over the Web site.

• In the long-term, a phone-based information service would be of value for delivering *real-time* transit information, and should be positioned accordingly --Respondents saw great value in real-time "next bus" or "next train" information, which probably best would be delivered via wireless phone service (since delivery via the home phone or computer would be less useful). Ultimately, wireless Web service would be the ideal, but penetration of wireless Web devices will probably not reach the same level as mobile phones for quite some time.

• The Web Portal and 511 services should be positioned differently overall, and not just with respect to transit information -- In traffic information focus groups, as well as in these transit groups, respondents indicated that the Web is better suited to their sit-down-and-plan needs for trips to unfamiliar destinations. At these times, users need "how to" information.   Conversely, wireless phones seem better suited to real-time information, when people are mobile and need to know "how long" or "when". Hence, the more focus groups we conduct, the more evidence we see that people use the Web and wireless phones very differently for information. Until the Web and wireless phones converge, information services should be positioned with respect to these differences.

3. Target Audience

• <u>The recommended target audience for transitinfo.org is fairly broad, demographically, but is well-defined and distinct in terms of psychographics</u> -- Demographically, the recommended target for transitinfo.org is essentially the typical transit user: skewed slightly to modest and middle income households, and to younger-to-middle-aged adults. All respondents in the transit groups fit this profile, and all responded well to the transitinfo.org concept.

In terms of psychographics, the research revealed an enthusiasm for transit information that, as discussed, helps users access the out-of-the-ordinary part of their lives. They associate this type of information -- particularly trip-planning -- with social activities, events, nature, and adventure. At the same time, the use and discussion of transit information seems to trigger a sense of responsibility, especially with respect to their jobs, the environment, and society.

Also, the target is probably not much into appearances and image -- or at least, doesn't seem to think that image and transit mix well. In the wrap-up exercise, respondents were least likely to pick the fashion consultant and SVP Marketing as probable users of the enhanced transitinfo.org service, and throughout the groups respondents seemed to convey themselves as pretty down-to-earth people.

4. Media, Events, Publicity

• <u>bayareacitysearch, SF Gate, craigslist, Bay Insider, The Bay Guardian, and similar events and entertainment-specific information sources would be the ideal vehicles for promoting the enhanced transitinfo.org</u> -- Ideally, such media would promote transitinfo.org as a service to their users, as opposed to paid advertising. By doing so, they would be implying their endorsement of public transit benefits, which would be viewed positively by broad cross-sections of their audiences. For transitinfo.org, these vehicles would reinforce the recommended lifestyle resource positioning, and reach the target when transit trip-planning is top-of-mind.

• <u>Public Internet access services have emerged in the Bay Area and should be investigated</u> --The Surf and Sip Network, for example, provides Internet access in 59 coffee house locations around the Bay Area. Also, Compaq this year signed a major deal to provide wireless internet access at Starbucks locations. Given that transit users liked the idea of electronic kiosks and out-of-home Web access, these emerging forms of public internet access might effectively expand awareness of transitinfo.org, as well as market penetration, trial, and usage frequency.

• <u>Attractions, events, and venues with strong environmental and other social concerns
(such as traffic or parking congestion, or drunk driving) would also provide good avenues
for promoting transitinfo.org</u> -- As already alluded to, at several points in the groups
respondents demonstrated particular civic-mindedness with respect the environment,
diversity, and other social issues. Promoting transitinfo.org in similar, civic-minded
contexts would likely strengthen the lifestyle bond between the brand and its users. Such
contexts might be found within the existing publicity materials from Parks & Recreation
Departments, educational programs, charities, and similar public service organizations.

• <u>Local media with editorial themes such as Bay Area nature, sports and adventure,
romantic get-aways, or culture and history might also provide good avenues</u> -- At times,
respondents seemed to describe some of their "out-of-the-ordinary" transit trips almost as
if they were mini-vacations. Hence, some of the same interests that motivate general
vacation travel -- like natural, cultural, or romantic destinations -- might also apply to
leisure trips within the Bay Area. A program like Bay Area Backroads, for example,
could provide an excellent environment for publicizing transitinfo.org, especially during
features on destinations that can be reached via transit.

• <u>During transit emergencies, transitinfo.org should be broadly referenced by local news
media</u> -- As a public service, news media should refer their audiences to the site for
further details that could affect workday commutes. This would help promote awareness
and usage of the announcements section of the site.

5. Features to Emphasize

• <u>The Trip Planner should receive primary emphasis as the marquis feature on
transitinfo.org, but not until it is proven consistently accurate</u> -- As discussed, the Trip
Planner seems to be the feature that best dramatizes the site's centralized and coordinated
information, and best enables transit users to access the out of the ordinary parts of their
lives. Unfortunately, it is also the feature that seemed to under-deliver the test user's
expectations. Although the eventual, complete Trip Planner will probably perform
significantly better, further consumer trials should be considered to measure results
against a performance objective. This seems critical to assure that the Trip Planner
delivers on its potential to generate trial, repeat, and positive word-of-mouth.

• <u>Secondary emphasis should be placed on the general announcements about new or
changed services</u> -- This feature helped assure respondents that any of a number of
potential service disruptions would not catch them by surprise and interfere with their
ability to get to work on time. Emphasizing this feature would also help balance the site's
overall appeal between responsible, work-related needs, and more carefree, leisure-
related needs. Respondents themselves seemed to have this balance and would appreciate
a brand that demonstrates the same.

• <u>A "search" box is an important but entirely expected feature; it should simply be included rather than emphasized</u> -- Although respondents indicated that a search box would be extremely useful, such a feature seems "cost-of-entry" for an information service. Touting the search box might seem sophomoric or overly solicitous.

• <u>Intelligent interactive maps with zoom functions were also important, but reactions to this feature seemed polar</u> -- To the respondents who found this feature important, it was very important. But to others, it was not at all critical. As to why this feature was important to some, explanations seems a bit vague or superficial. Perhaps just the novelty of this feature was appealing, or maybe it was hard to evaluate based on just a verbal description.

6. Executional Considerations for the Web Site

• <u>The most critical executional consideration for the Web site is to fine-tune and feature the Trip Planner</u> -- This was the lead feature in terms of interest and criticism. Consequently, the first executional priority should be to fix the Trip Planner's problems, and design it into the site in a way that is centrally prominent, exciting, and reinforces the recommended positioning. . In the near-term, the information on which areas/transit agencies are included/not included, should be made even more prevelant.

• <u>Another important consideration is how to make the overall site more graphic and visually exciting</u> -- Text and graphics should be combined in a way that maintains the site's no-nonsense factual appeal, yet introduces the necessary visuals to orient users, guide and stimulate their thinking process, and capture their positive feelings about 'out-of-the-ordinary" transit trips.

• <u>"Night Owl" information needs to be provided in a prominent, reassuring manner</u> -- Given the not uncommon need for late night transit trips and concerns about getting home during slow, erratic, or suspended service hours, transitinfo.org should include a feature that's specifically aimed at facilitating late night travel. For example, a Night Owl icon could be designed for the home page, and clicking on it would lead to a wealth of information about late night services. Such a section might also include announcements about additions to late night services, since these services currently seem very scarce and users would like to know if more are on the way.

• <u>The overall design of the design should convey two themes: one work-related, and one related to leisure</u> -- The work-related theme should emphasize features, like the announcements section, that apply to the user's routine commutes and their concerns about being able to get to work on time. The leisure-related theme should emphasize features that apply to the user's out-of-the-ordinary trips and their sense of fun and adventure.

• <u>Where appropriate, the site should indicate civic-mindedness and political correctness</u> -- For example, an icon could be developed that represents transit systems that use clean-burning fuels, or a map could display clean burning fuel systems and access to Bay Area nature preserves. Small international flags could appear on maps to indicate ethnic communities and the Bay Area's great diversity. Civic-minded quotes could be embedded at various points throughout the site. In summary, the target would appreciate any reflections of the socially and environmentally responsible feeling that transit usage seems to evoke.

• <u>Seasonal holiday schedules should maintain a fairly continuous presence on the site</u> -- To address fairly prevalent concerns about how transit schedules may vary during holidays, the site should always feature updates relevant to whatever holiday may be imminent. These updates might be a good place to highlight transportation services to Bay Area airports, since trips to the airport are likely to peak during such periods.

• <u>Where transit operators are listed -- especially some of the lesser known ones -- a few brief words of description would appeal to users</u> -- Frequent leisure users of transit seem to enjoy learning about previously unknown systems, especially if it appears that those systems provide access to interesting places. Just a few words describing each system's service area or primary destinations would be enough to pique the user's interest.